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Viewing cable 10PARIS144, FRANCE AND NORTH AFRICA: CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
10PARIS144	2010-02-08 11:37	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Paris

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.mediapart.fr/journal/international/170211/tunisie-wikileaks-portrait-dune-diplomatie-francaise-soumise-au-regime->

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PP RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHNP RUEHROV RUEHSL RUEHSR
DE RUEHFR #0144/01 0391137
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 081137Z FEB 10 ZFR ZFR ZFR
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8265
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 PARIS 000144

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/05/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AG](#) [TS](#) [MO](#) [LY](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: FRANCE AND NORTH AFRICA: CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

REF: PARIS 105

PARIS 00000144 001.2 OF 004

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Kathy Allegrone, Reasons 1.
4 (b), (d).

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¶10. (C) Rogeau was uncharacteristically stark and frank about the current "sad state" of Franco-Algeria relations. He employed words like "frigid" and "frozen" as well as "rather bad" to describe bilateral relations, which he said were simply "not moving." "All is blocked," he complained. As the principle cause for the impasse, he cited a precipitous deterioration since the August 2008 arrest of the Algerian chief of protocol, Mohamed Ziane Hasseni, for a politically-motivated murder he allegedly committed in Paris in 1987. Hassenni remained under judicial supervision in France until February 2009, but the judge has not yet delivered a verdict in the case. While Rogeau was unclear as to when this verdict might arrive, but said "the sooner the better." In addition, he said the Government of Algeria remains "very vexed" about allegations in France that the Algerian army participated in the murder of Tiberine monks murdered during the civil war of the 1990s. To distract attention from itself, the Algerian regime often attacks France or Morocco, noting the complicating factor that many Algerian elites remain francophile at the same time. They are, for instance, Rogeau argued, "more shy" in public about cooperation with Americans than they are about cooperation with the French, especially in the field of counter-terrorism (see below).

¶11. (C) Overall, Rogeau described a pervasive pessimism in the French MFA regarding Algeria: "It will take another general before normalization." Remarking on how "complicated" relations remain, he said the Algerians always focus on "what's not going right." For these reasons, among others, Algerian President Bouteflika has not visited France since President Sarkozy came to power in 2007. Nor has Sarkozy returned to Algeria since his two visits during 2007. Rogeau doubted that a visit will occur in either direction before the Hasseni affair is resolved.

... BUT CLOSE COUNTER-TERRORISM COOPERATION CONTINUES

¶12. (C) Despite the problems, Rogeau insisted, Algeria has remained a reliable partner on counter-terrorism (reftel). He noted, however, that the French are surprised by the continual Algerian refusal to expand their cooperation beyond a bilateral setting. They will not, for instance, permit "trilateral" exchanges of information, among the U.S., France and Algeria, or the U.K., France and Algeria. The Algerians limit their counter-terrorism cooperation to bilateral contacts because, Rogeau speculated, they seek to maintain tight control over both their relationships and their own counter-terrorism efforts. Still, he said this practice does not make sense because the Algerians likely realize that we -- French, British, and Americans -- exchange information among ourselves about terrorism in the Maghreb and the Sahel. The Algerians know that we all have the same enemy, objectives, and interests in this issue.

FRENCH INCLUDE ALGERIA AND LIBYA ON TRANSPORTATION WATCH LIST

¶13. (C) France has had the same problems as the USG with the fallout from announcements about new transportation regulations that target Algerian and Libyan citizens. The

Ministry of the Interior (MoI) made a decision about which countries to include on the list without consulting the MFA, Rogeau reported. Then the French and Algerian press announced the news before the MFA could inform the countries concerned. As a result, the Algerians and the Libyans, among others, have protested their inclusion on the watch list vigorously in Paris, in their own capitals, and in the media.

TUNISIA -- BILATERAL RELATIONS BACK ON TRACK

¶14. (C) Rogeau claimed French relations with Tunisia have begun returning to "normal" since the December 2009 visit to Tunis of Frederic Mitterrand, French Minister of Culture and Communication. After a series of public spats during 2009, following the Government of Tunisia's strident reaction to French criticism of their treatment of journalists, Mitterrand's trip reportedly helped diminish lingering tensions. The French currently perceive Tunisia as the most stable country in the Maghreb, according to Rogeau. Compared to their North African neighbors, he argued, Tunisia has a highly educated population (only a seven percent illiteracy rate, versus 50 percent in Morocco), with the lowest unemployment in the region, and a bureaucracy that functions reasonably well. Tunisia's economy has a strong reputation in the region, as exemplified by the investment it has attracted from Gulf countries. Rogeau claimed Tunisians appear to perceive a link between the practices of a police state and successful economic development; as a result, they accept a form of social contract: in exchange for stability

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and growth, the population keeps quiet. Moreover, apart from Ben Ali's succession, the French do not believe Tunisia faces destabilizing changes in the near-term. At the same time, Rogeau observed, Ben Ali's approach entails significant risks, including the growth of a middle class that demands more political freedom, and the risk that economic growth will slow or stop. If the government stops providing financial and social security, it will have broken the unspoken contract and the population may become less docile.

¶15. (C) As to one of the journalists whom the Government of Tunisia has harassed and imprisoned, Taoufik Ben Brik, Rogeau described him as "not the best example" of journalistic integrity. Rogeau reported that French courts are also currently pursuing Ben Brik, for having allegedly attacked a Tunisian woman who has decided to press charges against him in France. Ben Brik, according to Rogeau, is very well organized, with many contacts in France whom he has activated on his behalf. Nonetheless, the French no longer discuss his case with the Tunisians, Rogeau said. (NOTE: After French Foreign Minister Kouchner mentioned the case of Ben Brik in an interview in November 2009, Ben Ali responded angrily, accusing France, for the first time, of hypocrisy in light of its colonial history in Tunisia, according to Rogeau and MFA Tunisia Desk Officer Clemence Weulersse. See Paris Points, November 13, 2009. END NOTE.)

LIBYA -- DISAPPOINTED IN TRIPOLI'S COOLNESS TOWARD FRANCE

¶16. (C) French relations with Libya are "stable" at the moment, according to Rogeau, but the French are growing increasingly frustrated with the Libyans' failure to deliver on promises regarding visas, professional exchanges, French language education, and commercial deals. "We (and the Libyans) speak a lot, but we've begun to see that actions do not follow words in Libya," Rogeau lamented. "The Libyans talk and talk but don't buy anything (from us). Only the Italians land any contracts." The French have made many gestures, Rogeau claimed, which they believe have not reciprocated by the Libyans. He did cite one sign of progress: during his U.N. speech, Libyan leader Qaddafi did not attack either France or the U.S. directly. "This

omission was rare. We took note."" Rogeau said France must be patient, but they will move forward ""with less enthusiasm than before.""

RIVKIN